

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO EECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9073

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGUI 1691

LIMDIS

FOR ASST. SEC. MOOSE FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O.11652: GB

TAGS: PFOR, PC

SUBJ: FUTURE OF PEACE CORPS IN CAE

REF: STATE 186194, BANGUI 1690

1. I HOPE YOU WILL HAVE SEEN BANGUI'S 1690 WHICH PROVIDES MY OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION AND SOME ANALYSIS OF BOKASSA'S MOTIVES AND STYLE. THAT MESSAGE CONCLUDES THAT THERE IS NO IMMEDIATE LIKELIHOOD THAT STEPS WILL BE TAKEN AGAINST THE OVERALL PC PROGRAM.

2. IN MY MEETING WITH BOKASSA LAST WEEK WE DID TOUCH ON PEACE CORPS AND BOKASSA IMPLIED SOME FURTHER ACTION MIGHT BE TAKEN. HE GAVE ME NO INDICATION OF WHAT HE HAD IN MIND. MY ASSUMPTION IS THAT THE BEHAVIOR OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS WILL NOW BE CLOSELY SCRUTINIZED -- MORE SO THAT IN THE PAST -- FOR SIGNS THAT THEY ARE DISRESPECTFUL OF THE EMPEROR AND HIS FAMILY, SNOOPING AROUND FOR INFORMATION WHICH THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE, ENGAGING IN SOME SORT OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY, OR VIOLATING ONE OR MORE LAWS AND REGULATIONS OF THE COUNTRY. I HAVE TALKED WITH SOME 15 OF THE PCV'S IN BANGUI AND HOPE TO DO THE SAME WITH THE 30 TRAINEES IN M'BAIKI. THE THRUST OF MY COMMENTS HAS BEEN TO
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POINT OUT THE EXTREME SENSITIVITY OF THE GOCAE (BOKASSA) ON ALL THESE SUBJECTS, AND TO URGE THEM TO BE MOST CAREFUL TO AVOID ACTIONS WHICH WOULD FUEL LATENT SUSPICIONS. I UNDERSTAND THAT THE PC DIRECTOR, KAREN WOODBURY, HAS ALSO MADE SIMILAR POINTS. IF THE PCV'S ARE PRUDENT, AS THEY HAVE BEEN IN GENERAL IN THE PAST, I DO NOT ANTICIPATE ANY MAJOR REACTION AGAINST THE PEACE CORPS AS A WHOLE. IN MY JUDGMENT THE VOLUNTEERS ARE IN NO DANGER.

THEY ARE HIGHLY REGARDED IN THE MINISTRIES FOR WHICH THEY WORK,
AND ALL THE SIGNALS WE HAVE RECEIVED SINCE THE MAHER ARREST
ARE THAT THEY ARE WELCOME AND THAT THE GOCAE WANTS THEM TO STAY.
THERE HAS BEEN NO INTERRUPTION IN THE PROJECTS ON WHICH PCV'S
ARE WORKING. MAHER'S DETENTION AND EXPULSION RECEIVED NO LOCAL
PUBLICITY AND THE GOCAE DID NOT TRY TO BLOW IT UP INTO AN ATTACK
AGAINST PC IN GENERAL.

4. AS YOU KNOW WE HAVE A FINE AND INNOVATIVE PC PROGRAM WITH
MANY PROJECTS REACHING OUT TO THE RURAL POOR IN HEALTH, COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT, WELLS AND FISH CULTURE. OUR EDUCATION PROJECTS
MAKE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN INFRA-
STRUCTURE IN THE CAE. IT IS MY STRONG RECOMMENDATION THAT THESE
PROJECTS CONTINUE. I BELIEVE THAT DESPITE RECENT EVENTS THE GROUNDS
FOR COOPERATION EXIST.

5. I SHOULD ADD A NOTE OF CAUTION; WITH THE BEST WILL IN THE WORLD
ON THE PART OF THE PCV'S, ANOTHER INCIDENT MAY OCCUR. WITH SEVENTY
PCV'S SCATTERED ACROSS THE COUNTRY IT IS ALTOGETHER POSSIBLE THAT
ONE OR MORE VOLUNTEERS WILL RUN AFOUL OF THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION.
DETENTION OR POSSIBLE EXPULSION OF THE INDIVIDUAL COULD OCCUR.
I WOULD EXPECT THESE TO BE ISOLATED INCIDENTS UNRELATED TO THE
GOCAE'S BASIC DESIRE TO SEE THE PC CONTINUE ITS ACTIVITIES. IF
A PATTERN OF HARASSMENT WERE TO DEVELOP WE WOULD OBVIOUSLY HAVE
TO TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE SITUATION. FOR THE TIME BEING,
HOWEVER, I THINK YOU CAN REASSURE SAM BROWN ABOUT THE VOLUNTEERS'
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SAFETY AND ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR A RELATIVELY ORDERLY AND
EFFECTIVE PC PROGRAM.
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